

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method of screening a caller prior to establishing a telephone connection between the caller and a callee, the method comprising:

receiving an indication from the callee of one or more callers that are authorized to be directly connected to the callee upon calling the callee, wherein the indication includes an instruction to collect voice samples of the authorized callers;

receiving a telephone call from a caller;

prompting the caller to speak the name of the callee;

receiving the name of the callee when spoken by the caller, wherein the callee is a person and wherein the telephone call is directed to a telephone terminal for the callee for the purpose of speaking to the callee;

identifying the caller by analyzing the voice of the caller received when the caller speaks the name of the callee without asking the caller to self identify, wherein the identifying comprises the steps of:

generating a first voice sample of the caller's voice when the caller speaks the name of the callee; and

comparing the first voice sample to a second voice sample; and

routing the telephone call to the telephone terminal for the callee if the in response to determining that the first voice sample matches the second voice sample identified caller is authorized to be directly connected to the callee; and

disconnecting the telephone call in response to determining that the first voice sample does not match the second voice sample.

2-4. (Canceled)

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein prompting the caller to speak the name of the callee is done using a synthesized voice.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the name of the callee includes receiving electrical audio signals representing the name of the callee as spoken by the caller.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising creating a database containing multiple sets of digital voice samples, wherein each set within the multiple sets contains at least one digital voice sample for a different one of a plurality of callers.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein identifying the caller includes:
creating a test set of voice samples from the voice of the caller received when the caller speaks the name of the callee; and
individually comparing the test set of voice samples with the each set of voice samples in the database to identify whether the caller is one of the plurality of callers.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising routing the telephone call to a message recording system if the callee is unable to receive the telephone call.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Canceled)

13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising creating a database containing a plurality of digital text files, wherein each of the plurality of digital text files contains identification information for a different one of a plurality of callees.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the each of the plurality of digital text files is in ASCII format, and wherein the identification information includes the name of the callee.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the identification information further includes a telephone extension number for the callee.

16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 27, wherein identifying the caller includes:

converting the name of the callee as spoken by the caller into a test digital text file; and

individually comparing the test digital text file with the each of the plurality of digital text files in the database to identify the callee.

17-27. (Canceled)

28. (Currently amended) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon which, when executed by a computer, will cause the computer to perform a method of screening a caller prior to establishing a telephone connection between the caller and a callee, the method comprising:

receiving an indication from the callee of one or more callers that are authorized to be directly connected to the callee upon calling the callee, wherein the indication includes an instruction to collect voice samples of the authorized callers;

receiving a telephone call from a caller;

prompting the caller to speak the name of the callee;

receiving the name of the callee when spoken by the caller, wherein the callee is a person and wherein the telephone call is directed to a telephone terminal for the callee for the purpose of speaking to the callee;

identifying the caller by analyzing the voice of the caller received when the caller speaks the name of the callee without asking the caller to self identify, wherein the identifying comprises the steps of:

generating a first voice sample of the caller's voice when the caller speaks the name of the callee; and

comparing the first voice sample to a second voice sample; and

routing the telephone call to the telephone terminal for the callee ~~if the~~ in response to determining that the first voice sample matches the second voice sample identified caller is ~~authorized to be directly connected to the callee; and~~

disconnecting the telephone call in response to determining that the first voice sample does not match the second voice sample.

29-31. (Canceled)

32. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 28, further comprising creating a database containing multiple sets of digital voice samples, wherein each set within the multiple sets contains at least one digital voice sample for a different one of a plurality of callers.

33. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 28, further comprising routing the telephone call to a message recording system if the callee is unable to receive the telephone call.

34. (Previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 28, further comprising creating a database containing a plurality of digital text files, wherein each of the plurality of digital text files contains identification information for a different one of a plurality of callees.

35. (Currently amended) A system for screening a caller prior to establishing a telephone connection between the caller and a callee, comprising:

a voice recognition means operative to:

receive an indication from the callee of one or more callers that are authorized to be directly connected to the callee upon calling the callee, wherein the indication includes an instruction to collect voice samples of the authorized callers;

receive a telephone call from a caller;

prompt the caller to speak the name of the callee;

receive the name of the callee when spoken by the caller, wherein the

callee is a person and wherein the telephone call is directed to a telephone terminal for the callee for the purpose of speaking to the callee; and

generate a first voice sample of the caller's voice when the caller speaks the name of the callee;

a comparator means, in communication with the voice recognition means, operative to identify the caller by analyzing the voice of the caller received when the caller speaks the name of the callee without asking the caller to self identify, wherein in identifying the caller the comparator means is further operative to compare the first voice sample to a second voice sample; and

a call routing means, in communication with the voice recognition means and the comparator means, operative to route the telephone call to the telephone terminal for the callee ~~if the~~ in response to determining that the first voice sample matches the second voice sample ~~identified caller is authorized to be directly connected to the callee and disconnect the telephone call in response to determining that the first voice sample does not match the second voice sample.~~

36-38. (Canceled)

39. (Previously presented) The system of claim 35, wherein the comparator means further comprises a database containing multiple sets of digital voice samples, wherein each set within the multiple sets contains at least one digital voice sample for a different one of a plurality of callers.

40. (Previously presented) The system of claim 35, wherein the call routing means is further operative to route the telephone call to a message recording system if the callee is unable to receive the telephone call.

41. (Previously presented) The system of claim 35, wherein the comparator means further comprises a database containing a plurality of digital text files, wherein each of the plurality of digital text files contains identification information for a different one of a plurality of callees.